

## NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

### OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES of the meeting held at Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 7 November 2018 from 2.00 pm - 3.30 pm**

#### Membership

##### Present

Councillor Brian Parbutt (Chair)  
Councillor Anne Peach (Vice Chair)  
Councillor Jim Armstrong  
Councillor Azad Choudhry  
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora  
Councillor Glyn Jenkins  
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan  
Councillor Cate Woodward

##### Absent

Councillor Nicola Heaton  
Councillor Mohammed Ibrahim  
Councillor Sue Johnson  
Councillor Mohammed Saghir

#### Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Alex Castle-Clarke - Community Protection  
DS Mike Ebbins - Nottinghamshire Police  
Malcolm Dillon - Independent Chair of Nottingham City's Safeguarding Adults Board  
Steve Harrison - Crime and Drugs Partnership (CDP)  
Tim Spink - Crime and Drugs Partnership (CDP)  
Councillor Dave Trimble - Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Localities  
Zena West - Senior Governance Office  
Catherine Ziane-Pryor - Governance Officer

### 33 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Mohammed Ibrahim – unwell  
Councillor Sue Johnson – unwell  
Councillor Nicola Heaton – personal  
Councillor Mohammed Saghir - personal

### 34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

### 35 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2018 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

### 36 DISCUSSION WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR LEISURE AND LOCALITIES

Councillor Dave Trimble, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Localities, was in attendance to provide the committee with an update on progress against the Council Plan Priorities within his Portfolio.

Councillor Trimble delivered a presentation which is circulated with the initial issue of the minutes, along with a performance document which was circulated at the meeting.

In addition to the information provided, the following points were highlighted:

- (a) Of the 13 measurable priorities, 11 are rated green, 1 is amber and 1 is red;
- (b) The red priority of 'Make Nottingham the fastest growing city for disability sports participation in England' can still be considered a success as although the target is 7% of citizens accessing Leisure Centre facilities are disabled, the current achievement of 6.5%, is a considerable increase from a starting point of 3.5%, which in itself is notably higher than the national average of 1.5%;
- (c) This achievement is as a result of a focused drive by the City Council with the support of and a total of 52 disability organisations operating in the City, to encourage citizens with disabilities to access leisure facilities by ensuring easy entry and movement which complies with the 'credAbility access' guidelines, along with offering promotions, discount events and activities. In addition, to help build the confidence of some disabled citizens who may be nervous about entering a leisure centre, the City Council website provides photos and a film of the routes into the and around the centre including the disabled facilities available. Disabled citizens are encouraged to access mainstream activities wherever possible;
- (d) The rejuvenation of the Castle is ranked as amber as the project it is currently aligned to the proposed renovation schedule, there are a further 2 years before the project is due for completion. All exhibits have been removed and ground works have started;
- (e) The current total of 64 Green Flag Awards, including Heritage and Community Green Flag Awards within the City is a particularly significant achievement in light of funding cuts by central government. However, the majority of regeneration funding spent on improving parks and play areas is from external sources and has been as a result of the ability to contribute funding at a local ward councillor level;
- (f) Three further new joint service centres have been built with the last to be opened at Strelley on 12 November 2018. Moving the libraries into the new build properties has encouraged citizen usage and significantly increased library membership at both the Dales Centre and Hyson Green, which it is hoped will support an increase in childhood literacy skills;
- (g) 'Streets for play' was only transferred from the Transport Portfolio to Leisure during 2017 but progress has been made and it is easier for citizens to apply without charge for street closure sessions for individual or serial events. To date there have been a total of 23 successful applications. The largest challenge is encouraging citizens to organise their own events in preference to expecting the City Council to do so;
- (h) Since 2010, a total of 81 new playgrounds have been built. In 2015 the target was to provide 19 by May 2019, however 20 have already been completed, which is one of the best rates of new playground building in the country;
- (i) Instead of rebuilding on the current site, following consultation, it is now confirmed that Central Library will be moved into the new build Broadmarsh Car Park development. The

income generated from the current Angel Row site will help fund the furnishings for the new building;

- (j) Whereas in other parts of the country councils have had to close many of their libraries, Nottingham is expanding the range of activities available to children and adults at libraries, but this is only possible due to the much valued dedication and enthusiasm of partner organisations and volunteers;
- (k) Nottingham hosts a comprehensive range of events, including major national attractions;
- (l) All 8 leisure centres across the City have remained operational and where other councils have had to rationalise their provision or pass centres to the management of external organisations, Nottingham City Council continues to manage and maintain all 8;
- (m) Further reductions in funding are predicted so there can be no guarantees that current services won't change as there will inevitably be an impact.

The responses given to Committee members' questions included:

- (n) Whilst the provision of daily newspapers to libraries has stopped, Central Library should continue to provide access to newspapers but this can be clarified;
- (o) With regard to leisure facilities and opportunities available to Children in the Care of the Council, such as learning to swim and join clubs, proposals are being developed which if progressed, will provide opportunities for targeted groups of children and young people, not just those in care, to access leisure activities that they may not otherwise do so;
- (p) There is potential for Melbourne Park to be leased to Education F.C. With further budget restraints, and external funding opportunities becoming rarer, the Council needs to consider working with other organisations to ensure the sustainability of parks. By leasing the park the new tenant will be responsible for its maintenance but the lease will include a condition that the park remains freely accessible to everyone and use isn't limited;
- (q) Currently the City consists of approximately a 14% tree canopy area but the target within the tree strategy is 17%. Where a tree is removed, for whatever reason, at least 2 or 3 are planted to replace it. A successful bid to 'Trees for Cities' will provide 10,000 whip saplings to be planted this winter. As they are still very young they will take some time to mature but it is proposed that new wooded areas will be created within the City.

Members of the Committee congratulated Councillor Trimble on the positive achievements against the objectives set within the Council Plan, with particular praise around the improvements to local parks, including green flag awards, which have increased park usage so they have become popular and regular destinations for a range of citizens.

## **RESOLVED**

- (1) to note the update on the progress against the Council Plan Priorities within the Leisure and Localities Portfolio;**
- (2) to thank Councillor Dave Trimble for his presentation, attendance and achievements.**

### **37 PARTNERSHIP WORK FOR COMBATING AND PREVENTING YOUTH CRIMINALITY**

The Chair introduced the item focusing on 'County Lines' as an issue which had been highlighted nationally in the media and on which members of the Committee wanted to know more, specifically to better understand the issues affecting Nottingham City. The committee will consider the item over 2 meetings including prevalence, and what is being done to prevent and address young vulnerable people being exploited to undertake criminal activity.

Whilst partners are working closely to address the issue, for this meeting there is a focus on the Criminal Activity element and a focus at the next meeting on Children's Services and Safeguarding.

Tim Spink and Steve Harrison of the Crime and Drugs Partnership (CDP), Alex Castle-Clarke from Community Protection, Detective Sergeant Mike Ebbins from Nottinghamshire Police, and Malcolm Dillon, Independent Chair of Nottingham City's Safeguarding Adults Board, were in attendance.

Steve Harrison and Detective Sergeant Mike Ebbins delivered a presentation with supporting contributions from colleagues, which was circulated with the agenda.

Further to the information provided in the comprehensive report and presentation, the following points were highlighted:

- (a) The HM Government Serious Violence Strategy 2018 defines County Lines as 'a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas [within the UK], using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of "deal line". They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move [and store] the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.'
- (b) This type of activity overlaps into several areas of criminal concern including exploitation, modern slavery, safeguarding and of course drug dealing, and originally came to light when children and young people from South Lewisham (London) were found dealing drugs in Portsmouth;
- (c) Criminal gangs have befriended young and vulnerable people in Nottingham, and then used them to store drugs or cash in their homes, and/or to carry drugs to other unfamiliar and areas of the country to sell on the streets. People from Nottingham have been apprehended by other Police Forces as far away as Skegness, Oxford, Grimsby, London and Scotland;
- (d) It is known that there are criminal organisations operating in Nottingham but in spite of focused resources, it has proved very difficult to gather intelligence due to the nature of the exploitation in that the young people and vulnerable adults involved are generally groomed, and have a misguided loyalty to the groups or are too scared to speak out;
- (e) Although initially there may initially be a substantial financial incentive, it is known that once involved, criminal groups will use high levels of coercion to retain power over individuals. This may include staging a robbery of the person so that they then owe the group the lost cash and value of the drugs and are continuously in the group's debt with the threat of serious violence if not complying to demands. For those who remain

entrapped by these groups, there is often an escalation of criminal activity to include committing and being the subject of serious violence, intimidation and criminal activity;

- (f) One of the dilemmas for Police across the country is that safeguarding legislation has not kept pace with this sort of criminal activity in that at 16 years of age a young person is considered capable of making their own decisions. However, this does not allow for the grooming, manipulation and exploitation element of activity and therefore Local Authorities lack the tools to intervene, and in criminal law young and/or vulnerable people can be considered as criminals rather than victims. This is an area where all Police Forces and Officers need careful consideration;
- (g) Public awareness is growing and County Lines is recognised in the Government's 2018 Serious Crime Strategy with focused resources, the introduction of new legislation and the establishment of the National Coordination Centre. However, as criminal operational models can evolve quickly to try and keep ahead of the Police's understanding, such as changing the target group for drug runners or on-street dealers, so a broader awareness of suspicious behaviours is required;
- (h) Nottingham is currently known as an exporter of young and/or vulnerable people to other parts of the country so it is vital that safeguarding measures are in place for these young and vulnerable people for when they return to Nottingham;
- (i) One such case involved a 17 year old male from a stable family life who was recruited from an inner-City area within Nottingham. He told his mum he was going to football camp for 2 weeks but was taken to Grimsby and taught how to deal drugs. He was robbed twice, likely staged by the dealers to ensure he'd be indebted to them. The young man realised the position he was then in and called the Police. Lincolnshire Police returned him to Nottingham where safeguarding was put in place to support him and his family;
- (j) The criminal gangs involved in County Lines rely on their target being in unfamiliar areas and presume a lack of communication between Police Forces and other agencies, however this is not the case and where County Lines is suspected there is detailed information sharing across boundaries and agencies;
- (k) Public awareness of County Lines needs to be raised in the same way that awareness of the warning signs of child sexual exploitation have been recognised, so that all levels and areas of society are more aware of what should be considered as unusual behaviours, such as young people travelling alone over significant distances, staying alone in boarding houses and bed and breakfasts, or having large amounts of money without any apparent reason or source. In addition, a holistic approach needs to be taken with regard to early intervention. This will be discussed further at the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in December.

The following responses were provided to the Committee's questions:

- (l) Only 12 vulnerable/young people caught for drug dealing in the past 12 months in Nottinghamshire have been considered as victims, but there will be many more who are not considered victims and a number who are undetected;
- (m) There doesn't seem to be a particular issue with dealers being sent into Nottingham, more that our young/vulnerable people are being exported, so Nottinghamshire Police work with other forces to try and identify who is going where, how and why;

- (n) Drug related crime is increasing across the country but where caught, Police Forces are keen to apply 'Proceeds of Crime' enforcement to seize valuables;
- (o) There are a number of cross-agency preventative measures in place, the details of which will be presented at the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting;
- (p) Where dealer phone lines are identified, information is gathered and they are closed down, but this can be very difficult if public telephones are used;
- (q) It has been frustrating that some referrals made to the National Crime Agency's National Referral Mechanism (a framework for identifying victims of human trafficking or modern slavery) have not been accepted;
- (r) Targets are overwhelmingly young men but the Police and partners also include consideration of and prevention aimed at young women. Young women can be equally vulnerable and susceptible to County Lines, and criminal groups may use different or additional manipulation techniques for female victims, such as sexual exploitation;
- (s) Where a case is identified, partners come together to try and support that individual. It is vital that all intelligence is shared to ensure the best outcome and to strengthen further interventions;
- (t) Raising awareness is invaluable and it is positive that other agencies are making referrals and providing guidance for front line staff. Awareness for parents is also important and being promoted;
- (u) Social media is monitored and Police pages used to alert citizens when young and vulnerable people may have gone missing.

The Chair thanked attendees for their interesting presentation and report which will feed into the topic discussion at the next meeting. Following the next meeting the Committee will determine their recommendations.

Detective Sergeant Mike Ebbins extended an offer for Committee members to visit his team and consider the work of the National Referral Mechanism in more detail. Further discussion regarding co-ordination of a visit will take place with Senior Governance Officer, Zena West.

### **38 WORK PROGRAMME**

**RESOLVED to note the Committee's revised work programme for the remainder of the municipal year.**